15% water rate hike proposed

Rates would jump another 44% over four years starting in 2018/19

By Granville Fox
Tribune Reporter

Calistoga residents could see their water and wastewater rates increase by as much as 15 percent starting next March if the hikes recommended by an outside consultant and local subcommittee are adopted by the City Council.

Before it takes that step, however, the council will schedule a public hearing and notify water customers 45 days prior so that they may read the proposal and submit comments or suggestions about the new rate structure.

Members of the council were less than thrilled about moving forward with the recommended rate increases but they acknowledged that they have little choice.

"None of us are enthusiastic about this as you can see, but it is the necessary step," mayor Chris Canning said.

The changes are needed because neither the water or sewage charges generate enough revenue to cover the costs of providing the services, including operation and maintenance of the water and wastewater facilities.

On top of that, the city must continue to pay existing debt service obligations, as well as fund replacement of aging water systems infrastructure and mandated improvements required under a 2016 state Cease and Desist order.

Consultant Barrle Wells Associates, who presented its rate structure proposal and submit comments or suggestions about the new rate structure.

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City, businesses still assessing economic losses due to wildfires

By Granville Fox & Kim Beltran
Tribune Staff

A month after a series of devastating wildfires brought routine daily life – and the Napa Valley’s economic engine to a standstill, Calistoga business owners and employees are still feeling the pinch of that shutdown on their pocketbooks.

This week, with both auto and pedestrian traffic on Lincoln Avenue noticeably heavier, several retailers reported an uptick in the number of out-of-town visitors and expressed a sense of optimism that business is on the upswing.

Clive Richardson, co-owner of Calistoga Roastery, estimated that in the immediate wake of the fires and a complete evacuation of the town, sales at his coffee shop were down 70 percent during the week and 60 percent on weekends. To combat this dip in clientele, Richardson shortened his hours but noted he was sure the alteration would be brief because “there’s a general sense that business will come back,” he said.

Many local and area businesses have been offering promotions and deep discounts as a way

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School district, employees reach contract agreement

By Kim Beltran
Tribune Editor

Calistoga Joint Unified School District non-teaching employees, including management, will receive a two percent salary increase this year and next under terms of a new contract approved this week by board of education trustees.

The three-year collective bargaining agreement calls for members of the California School Employees Association (CSEA) to also receive a wage boost in the 2019-20 school year equal to that negotiated by the local teachers’ union. The Calistoga Associated Teachers have not yet negotiated a new contract.

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A shot in the arm

Above, Sean O’Neill receives a flu vaccine injection from Pacific Union College student Tristan Brandmeyer Wednesday afternoon during a Napa County Health Department free flu shot clinic in the Tubbs Building at the Napa County Fairgrounds in Calistoga. At left, public health nurse Debra Price prepares to administer a vaccine during the clinic, her last, she noted, as she plans to retire in five weeks. The public health department is hosting three more free shot clinics: Monday, Nov. 13, in American Canyon; Wednesday, Nov. 15, at St. Helena Elementary School from 3 to 6 p.m., and Monday, Dec. 4, at the Berryessa Senior Center, 4380 Spanish Flat Loop, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Photo by Claude James Mohler

Fearing possible damage to the city’s public water system from excessive erosion in the wake of the Tubbs Fire, the City Council on Tuesday voted to keep in place a local emergency declaration adopted last month.

With some 2,000 acres of charred land within the Napa River Watershed that flows into the city’s water reservoir, council members were worried about recouping potential cleanup and repair costs should winter rains bring a deluge of soil and debris into the system.

"Now the threat has really shift ed from being a fire threat to an erosion control and water runoff threat," city manager Dylan Feik said Tuesday night.

A report from the Watershed Emergency Response Team, put in place to assess the risk to public health from fire-related environmental issues, predicts a 10-12 percent increase in soil erosion

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Council extends emergency due to fire fallout

By Granville Fox
Tribune Reporter

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